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RE: HB 5922, Classifying the Crossbow as a Bow

Good Morning.

My name is Bill Audette and I am a resident of Lake Orion. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share my thoughts on HB 5922, a bill to classify the crossbow as a bow, and hopefully strike, once and for all, the political and social agenda that has controlled this dialogue for decades.

At the end of the day, archery may not be for everybody. However, Michigan's unparalleled and bountiful natural resources are! And when policy is adopted that creates barriers to citizens from having unfettered and equal access to our resources without good cause, someone must stand up to rectify it. That, regrettably, is the situation we are in right now.

As you will certainly recall, in 2008, the House of Representatives passed HB5741, a bill that would allow full inclusion of the crossbow throughout the entire State of Michigan during any season where all other archery equipment is permitted. The vote was a staggering 94 in favor and 14 against.

Members of the House recognized in 2008 the obvious benefits that would accrue to the State of Michigan and its citizens from full inclusion of the crossbow. These include, as my colleague has pointed out, recruiting and retaining hunters, commerce and tourism and generating much needed state revenue through license sales, sales tax, fuel tax, Pittman/Robertson, to name a few. Similarly, the vote in 2008 assured that Michigan stay competitive with all of its neighbors that already allow full inclusion including; Ohio, Ontario and most recently, Pennsylvania. Regrettably, the bill was not taken up by the Senate before the end of the session and these matters were then taken up by the NRC—and... we all know what happened next.

Then, in January 2009, as part of the NRC taking up the same crossbow expansion issue, Wildlife Conservation Order #2 was submitted by the DNR. Contained in this memorandum is perhaps the most profoundly important sentence surrounding the entire dialogue regarding crossbow expansion over the last fifty years. It reads:

"The Wildlife Division has stated that the use of crossbows would not have a detrimental effect on wildlife populations."

Once in the public domain, I confirmed with Director Humphries's office that this statement was indeed scribed in the context that it applied to the entire State of Michigan during all hunting seasons and, not merely in some other, limited context. It was confirmed in the former.

To the thinking person, this can mean only one thing: science has been satisfied. Crossbows will not hurt the resource. One would therefore conclude that the next logical step would have been to craft policy that reconciles this declaration by providing hunter opportunity of an equal measure. And as always in these types of matters, political and social considerations must not come into play.

Unfortunately, the NRC failed to live up to its obligation that requires it, as a body, to manage our resources based solely on sound scientific principles, as mandated under Proposal G. What was approved last March was a seemingly disconnected and arbitrary hodgepodge of non-scientific policy, leaving even those totally opposed to crossbow expansion in disbelief, including:

- In the northern two thirds of the state, one must be fifty years of age or greater to hunt with a crossbow. And, even then, this class can hunt only during the first half of the archery season!
- Where permitted, one must be age twelve or older to hunt with a crossbow, wherein a person, starting at age ten, is permitted to use any other archery equipment and/or a *firearm*
- Statewide, crossbow arrow speed can not exceed 350 feet-per-second whereas there are no limitations on other archery equipment which today routinely eclipse that threshold!

By simply classifying the crossbow as a bow, it will then coincide with any/all regulations and seasons that apply to longbows, recurve-bows, compound-bows respectively. Similarly, it makes the above NRC policies a moot issue. And finally, it negates the entire permitting process for those persons having a medical disability.

There is yet another reason why this legislation is so important. You may or may not be aware, but the entire platform established last year by the NRC contains a three-year sunset proviso. This means that in 2012 we will be back at ground zero; where the rules and regulations affecting the crossbow could be expanded, left the same, reduced and yes, even abolished.

I for one, having been involved in this process for many years now, do not believe for even one second that the hardened constituency that steadfastly fought to stunt any and all expansion of the crossbow agenda in our State for decades, will not reemerge in 2012 in a vigorous effort to dismantle the progress, albeit imperfect, that we've made to date. This law will make any such thrust within the NRC impossible, by keeping this authority in the legislative arena.

Mr. Chairman, it is time for the Legislature to retake the lead and complete the work it started in June 2008. It is time to correct the disjointed social and political criteria interwoven into the crossbow policy established by the NRC in 2009. It is time to march forward, armed with the indisputable statement from our own DNR that crossbows will not have a negative effect on wildlife populations- in any and all venues! And it is time to accomplish all this in one fell swoop by simply defining a crossbow for what it really is: a bow!

Representative Bolger, you are to be commended for your foresight and leadership by sponsoring this bill. The benefits that will accrue to the State of Michigan and now, *all* of its citizens will be significant.

Finally, as we look at these matters from the perspective of where we have been, where we are today and where we should be going, I ask myself this question, "Is this good legislation? And, the answer is a solid YES!

Thank you.